

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 28, 2019

David Bernhardt
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

RE: Protect Florida's Coasts from Oil and Gas Drilling

Dear Acting Interior Secretary Bernhardt,

We write to urge you to protect the coasts of Florida from oil and gas development. As you know, last year, former Interior Secretary Zinke announced that Florida would be exempt from any offshore drilling plans. However, we remain concerned that no formal action has been taken to prohibit drilling off Florida's coasts. Florida's natural resources and economy, as well as the military mission as expressed by the Department of Defense, cannot bear the risk and devastating impacts of offshore drilling. We urge you to take formal action to exempt drilling off Florida's coast from the five year plan for oil and gas lease sales.

Florida's economic well-being is dependent upon our state's fragile and treasured coasts. Clean coasts and healthy oceans are the fundamental underpinning of jobs and revenue in our communities. Florida's coastal communities thrive in concert with a healthy marine environment. Views littered with drilling platforms, industrialization of coastline and oil on our beaches spell disaster for Florida's economy and our neighbors who rely on tourism, fishing and related business.

We saw, firsthand, the destruction offshore drilling can have on ocean health, coastlines, and tourism in 2010 during the Deepwater Horizon disaster. Tourism dropped across the state, including areas that were unaffected by the rig explosion. Even without a blowout, offshore oil rigs dump tons of drilling muds, fluids, and metal cuttings – including toxic metals and carcinogens – into the ocean, and pose a threat to human health, marine ecosystems, and wildlife.


While there are ample environmental and economic reasons to prohibit drilling off Florida's coasts, our national security and military readiness also require keeping the rigs away from Florida. The eastern Gulf of Mexico is a critical training area for our military and the Department of Defense has stated clearly that the area is an "irreplaceable national asset" for

combat force readiness. Any oil and gas development would be an obstacle to military preparedness and national security.

Finally, the people of Florida are also clearly opposed to oil and gas development off our coast. A constitutional amendment on Florida's November 2018 ballot to ban offshore drilling in state waters passed overwhelmingly. Here is objective proof that Floridians recognize that the state's economy depends on a pristine environment, and that offshore drilling threatens Florida's future.

Florida relies on coastlines unencumbered by oil and gas drilling to sustain its economy, preserve its natural resources, and protect our nation's military. We urge you to exempt Florida's coasts from any offshore drilling plans. We must preserve and protect Florida's future.

Sincerely,



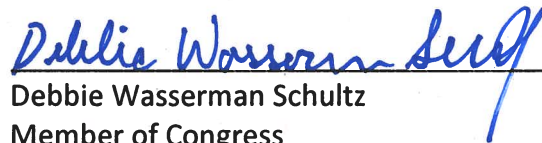
Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



Francis Rooney
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Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



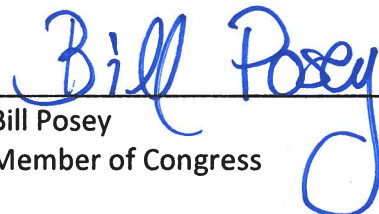
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
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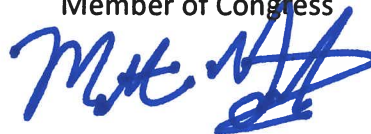
Donna E. Shalala
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Charlie Crist
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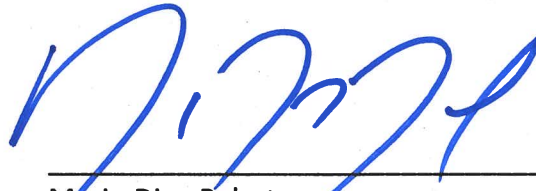
Bill Posey
Member of Congress



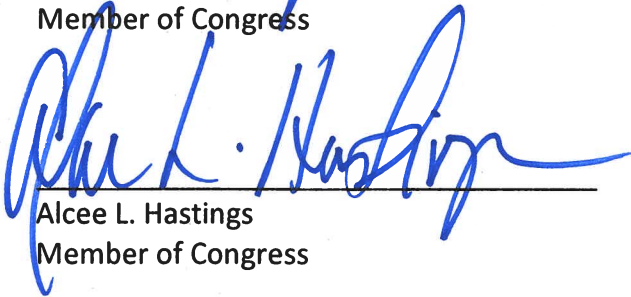
Matt Gaetz
Member of Congress



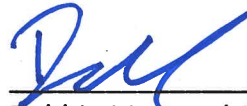
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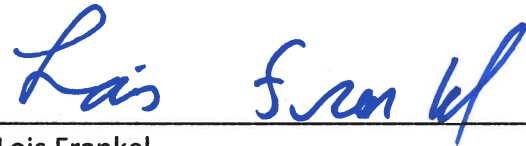
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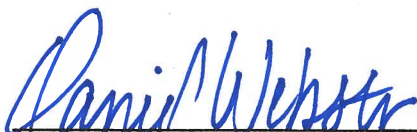
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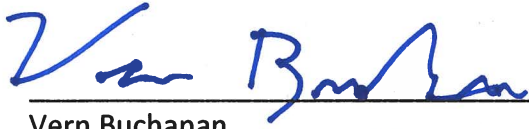
Val Butler Demings
Member of Congress



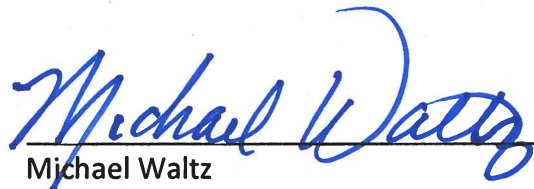
Daniel Webster
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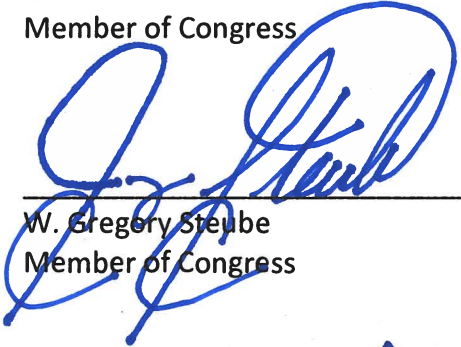
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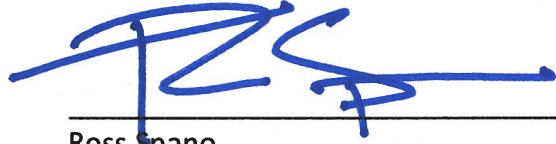
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